HUMANISTS OF MINNESOTA
HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

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Saturday
May 20th, 2017

Annual Meeting

First Unitarian Society
900 Mt. Curve Avenue
Minneapolis

Doors open at 10:00 a.m.
Lunch at Noon

HUMANISM:

A better life for all through education, democracy, free speech, reason, and science, without reliance on arbitrary dogmas, revelations, and faith.

Humanists of Minnesota Annual Meeting:

Grassroots Humanism:

Strengthening our Community, Growing the Movement

Saturday, May 20th, 2017

Please join us this month for our annual meeting! Learn what's going on in the organization, about our accomplishments this past year and some of our ideas for next year. Participate in the Board elections—vote for officers and at-large directors. Come share your ideas for strengthening our community—how this group can better represent your interests and meet your needs. Come explore how you can get more involved to promote our values and extend our reach. Come deepen your connection with fellow humanists and engage in small group brainstorming sessions. And of course come enjoy a free lunch and good camaraderie all around!

We are an all-volunteer, democratically-run, grassroots organization. The ongoing support and engagement of all the dedicated members who built and maintained this community for so many years is essential. And for the vitality and future of the organization, our newer members are needed to step forward to help strengthen and grow our movement with your fresh ideas and additional energy.

Our message and our values as humanists are needed now more than ever. As we become more visible and active in the larger community, people are heartened to learn of our movement. We have a message that appeals; we have values that people care about. We have so much potential to build an even more vibrant community with the help of all our members and friends. Together we can make a difference in a world that needs our message and values so very much! See you on the 20th! Ω

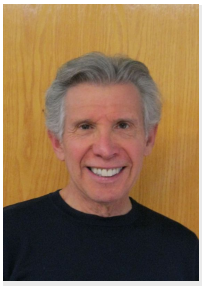
Save the Dates!

Freethought Summer Picnics!

June 11, July 16, August 13

Frolic with Fellow Freethinkers!

More Information to come!



Guest Editorial:

Interesting Times Indeed

by Harlan Garbell,
Vice President

In 1966 Robert F. Kennedy gave a speech where he referenced what he claimed was an ancient Chinese curse - "may you live in interesting times." Why this is considered a curse is that, historically, interesting times are often associated with tumultuous events that are unsettling for individuals living during these times. My entire adult life I have always appreciated the irony of this curse. However (and ironically), there is actually no evidence that such a Chinese curse ever existed. Nevertheless, this past year has been interesting - and unsettling.

My sense is that I am not alone in feeling this. There is an unrest in the land. Anyone who fails to see this has not been paying attention. Masses of people have been demonstrating in the streets all over the nation on various issues including women's rights, police misconduct, science, etc. People don't demonstrate unless they are unsettled and make the personal decision to get out of their comfort zones to join others in protest.

So, what does this have to do with humanism and our organization? Since being a member of Humanists of Minnesota I have spent countless hours in the comfort of a chair listening to well-meaning, articulate, and educated people espouse their views on a variety of issues. These issues often involve the environment, religion, science, peace, social inequality, and so forth. After these lectures or discussions I go home feeling good about myself for being a part of a virtuous community. But these are "interesting times," and my comfort zone is getting smaller. And I believe the comfort zones of many of my humanist friends in this organization are getting smaller as well.

As many of you know, Humanists of Minnesota has created a social action team for the purpose of providing a vehicle for members to get more active on issues that are consistent with our humanist values. These issues include (1) the right of all people to get adequate health care, (2) the protection of our environment and global warming abatement, (3) the right of people to make their own end-of-life choices, including aid-in-dying, and (4) remedying a criminal justice system that has unfairly targeted people of color.

The objective of our social action team is not necessarily to get people marching in the streets. The goal is to lend our support to people and organizations that are already in the vanguard in the movement for making meaningful change. These organizations use the political and legislative process in an effort to make people's lives better. Yes, it's still fine to go to films, lectures, and discussions that provide information on problems and issues of importance. However, in order to remedy these problems people need to take the next step and organize to make for real change. Progress only happens when people make it happen.

Some members are comfortable with the organization as it is and may question why we are going in the direction of more activism. Fair enough. I would ask these members to review the "Affirmations of Humanism" which are part of our organization's bylaws. Specifically, the affirmation that "We are concerned with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance." Or, how about "We want to protect and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species." I would ask these members if they have a better idea as to how to make this happen.

Yes, we should continue to discuss these issues at Chapter meetings, TED Talks, Coffee and Current Events, and so forth. And, we will. But, at some point we need to ask ourselves, what next? The social action team is an effort to answer that question. After all, we live in "interesting times." Ω

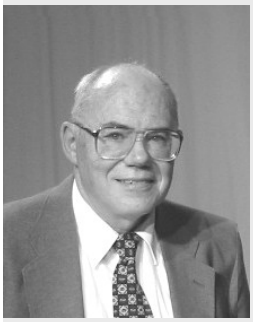
Highlights from the Board

by David Guell
Secretary

From the February board meeting:

- Rohit reported results of recent work to move the website to SquareSpace.
- Harlan reported results of his negotiations concerning costs for space, storage and food for chapter meetings at FUS.
- Ellie reported that a separate MeetUp group has been created for members only.
- The question of whether to hold chapter meetings on Saturday afternoons was discussed.

Humanist Community



Our Fab Four, Prisons, and Criminal Justice

By Paul Heffron, HofMn Historian

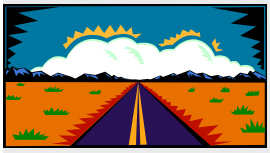
We have four members in state prisons serving long sentences. In this and coming issues you will find something about them in the Caring Connections Columns. You are encouraged to write to them and get to know them. They are all remarkable examples of humanist character and aspiration. They rehabilitated themselves in prisons not especially conducive to correction. Getting to know them is an education and an expansion of your circle of humanists. To me they are our Fab Four.

They have provided me with an ongoing education into our criminal justice system, prisons, and the reforms that are so urgently needed. This ties in with one of our social action efforts, namely, criminal justice and prison reform. Recently we sponsored the showing of *13th*, the excellent documentary on the treatment of African-Americans historically and the current era of the massive incarceration of blacks. The title refers to the 13th amendment to the Constitution which bans slavery except in prisons.

Our Fab Four are examples of inmates who should no longer be in prison. They are products of the era of long sentences for punishment and the failure of parole. They represent the waste of enormous amounts of taxpayers' money for the proliferation of prisons. For me this astounding increase in sentencing and prisons is symbolized by the fact that the college I graduated from is now a federal prison. Fortunately our Fab Four are in public prisons, which in many cases aren't as bad as the ever-increasing private, for-profit prisons that were recently praised by President Trump.

Calvin Newnam was the first of the Fab Four. He introduced me to the next two, and that led me to contact the fourth. Calvin provided me with a subscription to *Prison Legal News*, an eye-opening publication that comprehensively covers the prison controversies and legal cases and the never-ending settlements. There you find endless examples of how our prisons collectively constitute a country within a country, with a population the size of many countries in the world. It's a country with its own culture, which makes most inmates unfit to return to society upon release. This is spelled out by Mary D. Looman and John D. Carl in *A Country Called Prison* (Oxford University Press, 2015). Now I'm getting into my Book Notes and must stop. I hope to comment on other books I've read in this field in my Book Notes column. I turned 80 last month, so don't count on it. *(But Paul, we* are *counting on it! – Ed.)*

Postscript: For those interested in helping ex-felons, please consider getting involved with Justice 4 All—an initiative of Take Action MN. Join Audrey Kingstrom at their monthly community meetings the first Thursday of each month to work on their Fair Hiring Campaign for ex-felons. Contact Audrey for details: akingstrom@comast.net Ω



Spring Highway Cleanup

Saturday, May 6th, 10 a.m.

Time again for our semi-annual highway cleanup. This is a great opportunity to show humanists at work in the community. We pick up trash between mile markers 38 and 39.5 on I-35W. A big turnout means we finish sooner and have more time to socialize, so please consider volunteering.

We meet at the Holiday station store, located at exit 36 of Interstate 35W at Highway 23 (right turn from 35W northbound). **This is the last exit on 35W going north, five miles *before* it joins 35E, and is about nine miles north of 35W and I-694.**

Trash bags and pastel-colored vests will be provided. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes; bring along sunscreen and insect repellent as needed. Gloves are useful, too!

We are usually finished by noon and invite you to join us for lunch and good conversation at Matthew's Family Restaurant:
2 South Pine Dr., Circle Pines, MN 55014

Here is a link to a Google map of the 2 locations:
Holiday station to Matthew's restaurant

If you have questions, contact Juliet at smithbranca@gmail.com.

Candidates for the Humanists of Minnesota Board of Directors

Officers

President:

Audrey Kingstrom

I welcome the opportunity to lead and represent HofMN for one final two-year term. As a board member for the past 6 years, and serving as president for the last 3 years, I have been working hard to strengthen the organization and grow our membership. I want to continue developing healthy team leadership by broadening and deepening the engagement of our members. I am especially focused on the sustainability of our organization for the long-term by updating our communications, technology, media and outreach efforts. I am eager to help develop and support the emerging social action initiatives that are re-energizing our organization. Finally, I will continue to work towards building our local humanist community as a place of friendship, personal growth, life-long learning and service to others.

Vice President:

Harlan Garbell

I am honored and grateful to be nominated for the office of Vice President of Humanists of Minnesota. During the past year I have served on the Membership team (Co-Chair); Program Committee; Editorial Board; and Nominating Committee (Chair) of the organization. My vision for the upcoming two years is to support our president and help our organization advance in three areas of special concern to me: (1) making Humanists of Minnesota an even more welcoming community to our membership; (2) increasing the scope of programming options available to members; and (3) advancing the social justice causes the organization has identified as vital to our humanist community. Come join me in these efforts.

Treasurer:

Nick Hayden

I'm very excited to serve as Treasurer for Humanists of MN, and happy that my professional background can be leveraged at an organization I believe in greatly. I look forward to presenting HofMN financials in a way where we can all see how every dollar we put into the organization helps to promote and support our beliefs and values that we all find within Humanism. Make sure to say hi next time you see me around!

Secretary:

David Guell

I've been involved with Humanists of Minnesota for the last four years, starting with the effort to move our membership rolls online. For the last year, I've served on the Board as the Secretary and before that as an At-Large member and on our Media/Tech team. With degrees in chemical engineering, I know well the power of science and reason to solve problems and make human life better. For me, Humanism is the natural extension of reason to everyday life including politics and philosophy.

Directors at Large:

Ellie Bjorklund

I am so honored to be a part of the Humanists of Minnesota Board. My experience as co-chair of the Membership Committee has given me immense appreciation for the dedication our members have to the causes we support and the world views we promote. I look forward to further contributing to our organization.

Mark Coffey

I have been honored to serve on the board of the Humanists of Minnesota since 2015 and I'm excited to be nominated for another term. Some of the projects I've been involved in the last couple of years are the chapter meetings speakers committee, the Humanist Families initiative and the monthly mobile food shelf we staff at a senior's apartment building in St. Paul. I look forward to continuing the great work this organization does in living the values of humanism.

Ron Lien

It is clear to me that the philosophical and ethical stances of Secular Humanism are far superior options for humankind than adherence to orthodoxy, tradition, and authoritarianism. I would like the opportunity to positively contribute to the Humanists of Minnesota of which I have been a member for over one year and in which I have been impressed with the leadership, members, Meetup opportunities, hosts of events, and speakers. I am an active member regularly attending many of the wide variety of events offered by HofMn. In addition, I am the Event Host for the HofMn Minneapolis site of the Mobile Food Shelf for The Food Group, and have marched in the May Day and Pride Parades, as well as volunteering at the HofMn information booths.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

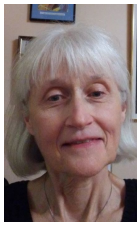
Suzanne Perry

I have been active in humanist communities in Minnesota and Washington, D.C., for more than 15 years. Most recently, I have served on the Humanists of Minnesota editorial committee and as leader of the new Social Action Team. My career has been devoted to journalism and communications. As a board member, I would like to use those skills to help HofMN play a more prominent role in the community, including through advocacy. I would especially like to let more people who share our values know they may have a home with us.

Rohit Ravindran

It is a privilege to be nominated as an At-Large Director with the Humanists of Minnesota. Over the past six years of being with the organization, I have co-led several technology efforts including the upgrade of our website, membership database and social media outreach. I have also volunteered for various events and used my passion for humanism to help drive the organization forward by being on the board of directors. I work as a technologist in the Twin Cities, and am especially interested in bringing discussions regarding animal ethics to the realm of humanism. I look forward to bringing my energy and skills to making further inroads within the humanist movement over the coming year.

Molly Wilbur-Cohen



I have been a member of Humanists of Minnesota for 3 years and am now seeking a one year position on the Board. The vision and values of the Humanists of MN are very much in sync with my own. I work part time in healthcare and have worked in various positions in health for over 20 years. All my adult life, I have been a social justice activist. Currently I am active with the ACLU PeoplePower movement and am a member of the Tar sands Pipeline Resistance Team of MN350. I am also a member of the Jewish Humanist Congregation of Or Emet where I am the Adult Education Chair. Music is a big part of my life and I perform in local gigs and in a chamber group.

Note: When elected, nominees will join Mahad Muhammad who is midpoint in his 2-year term as an at-large board member.

(Much thanks to our Nominating Committee: Harlan Garbell (Chair), Greg Hart, Yumi Iwasaki, Ron Lien, and Michelle Losey.) Ω

Humanist Community:

Caring Connection Corner

The Caring Connection Corner is a place for members to share with our community. It's a space to share good news, life events, health updates, and times of need. Communities flourish with openness and support, so let's unite in celebrations and difficult times. If you have an update you'd like to share (for yourself or on behalf of another), please send it to editor@humanistsofmn.org.

Dale Handeen, long-time member of Humanists of MN and out-going Board member, moved back to western Minnesota last fall to care for her parents. Here is an excerpt of recent correspondence Audrey Kingstrom had from her:

"My hands are absolutely full with teaching art grades 7-12 in rural Madison (near Montevideo), and doing elder care for my two 92 year old parents. I was asked to work with the school play set design effort, and was just today asked to judge a 'nutritional art' contest. Fun little things such as those requests abound. What I do for myself is sing in the Prairie Arts Chorale, and that is enjoyable, involving a weekly rehearsal, and a concert series seasonally with 5 or 6 dates in venues around southwest Minnesota. Then, too, I am active with the Willmar Unitarian Universalist congregation in leadership on the program committee. I would like to increase the awareness of the humanist life stance, Humanism, the movement and Humanists of Minnesota, as well as the AHA, in rural Minnesota. Greet all for me, please." Ω

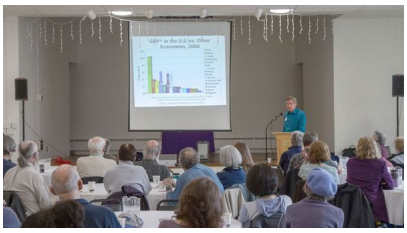
April Chapter Meeting

The Irresponsible Pursuit of Paradise

Summary by Nathan Curland

Nearly 50 humanists and friends gathered at our April Chapter meeting to hear Dr. Jim L. Bowyer, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota, speak on "The Irresponsible Pursuit of Paradise," which is also the title of his recently released book on sustainability.

Professor Bowyer began by stating the key problem he wishes to address, namely that "we are the greatest consumer nation in the world and that each child, born today, will consume 1400 tons of materials (defined as metals, minerals and fuels) in their lifetime." Furthermore, imports supply much of this consumption, primarily because the environmental impact of acquiring these materials is not desirable (the "not in my backyard" effect). National laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), have made the United States the country with more stringent environmental laws than anywhere else in the world, and which thus permits us to "export the environmental issues" associated with material extraction.



He followed these statements up by showing us a list of everything we get from somewhere else. As an example, out of 94 basic chemicals, for 81 we are net importers, and in many cases 100% are imported. He noted that when local governments or communities do an environmental impact study, they never take into account the likely impact on the localities where we will get the materials that are being considered.

Bowyer then turned our attention to population projections, since population is a key driver of materials consumption. He noted that all the growth for the coming decades will be from developing countries just as the growth from developed countries is flattening (or even decreasing). Furthermore, although the "rate of population growth" is presumably declining, as the years have gone by, projections for the year 2050 continue to go up. The Gross World Product (GWP) is at about $60 trillion and, from 1970 to 2014, grew by a factor of 3.8, whereas the world population grew by a factor of only 2.0. This is an indication that world consumption of materials is exploding and much of this is happening in the developing nations, as people there aspire to achieve lifestyles similar to what we have in the developed world. The ranking of countries by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Whereas the USA used to be a dominant #1, China has now taken over that position and India will soon be #2.

As a result of this growth, the world consumption of raw materials in many sectors has increased by huge factors. Scarcity of some materials has become a big concern, not necessarily because of physical supply but due to ownership/location and the environmental impact of extraction. For example, we are running out of high grade ore (high grade meaning "easier to extract") but there is plenty of low grade ore which can be extracted but at greater cost and environmental impact. Simultaneously, the developed countries are running the risk of being marginalized in their ability to obtain scarce materials due to their strict environmental regulations set against the increasing consumption by the developing nations, that do have the material resources and willingness to extract them.

Bowyer ended his talk with a section on "what can we do?" He listed items such as: moderate our consumption; move toward a "total closed-loop" society (i.e. complete recycling); take more responsibility for consumption impacts; and develop lower environmental impact products. He noted that trees are the only major renewable resource we have, and we are currently harvesting trees at half the rate that they are re-growing. (One of the unintended consequences of this is a high pileup of dead wood in western forests which, to some extent, fueled the numerous wildfires of recent years.)

In the Q&A session that followed, Bowyer further elaborated that the government's role in helping to solve these issues is primarily to assist in coordinating activities. It could help startups with subsidies; government labs can do basic development research; and it can promote international government cooperation. He further noted that the number one issue in the USA is that energy is too cheap. Therefore the number one action we can take is to lower the income tax and raise taxes on energy. He is also in favor of mining minerals closer to home because if we did, we would appreciate the environmental impact more and therefore be more motivated to take action.

After the meeting nearly half the attendees stayed for further discussion, socializing, and an excellent taco lunch organized by Mark Thoson from Pepito's. Ω

HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

Editor, Nathan Curland
Editorial Committee - Harlan Garbell, Suzanne Perry, Mahad Muhammad, Nathan Curland

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: *editor@humanistsofmn.org* with the word "newsletter" in the subject line, or to P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. (E-mail submissions are preferred.) All submissions must include the writer's full name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. All submissions become the property of this newsletter and cannot be returned. Submission deadline is the 23rd of the prior month.

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Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

Twin Cities Chapter: Sunday, May 7th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "What is a UFO?" by Mike Petkovic. Augsburg College, Christensen Center 1st Flr, 720 22nd Ave S., Minneapolis.

Stillwater Chapter. Monday, May 8th, 7:00 p.m.: "How Corruption and Greed Led To 2008's Economic Armageddon," by Jack Carter. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

West Metro Chapter: Saturday, May 27th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "How Corruption and Greed Led To 2008's Economic Armageddon," by Jack Carter. RidgePointe Senior Apts, 12600 Marion La. W, Minnetonka.

Maple Grove Discussion Group:

Saturday, May 13th, 10:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.: "Overindulgence: How Spoiling Children Impacts Their Adult Lives" with Jean Illsley Clarke, PhD. Maple Grove Community Center, 12951 Weaver Lake Rd, room 133, Maple Grove 55311, $5 donation. Register at landforsale@visi.com or call Laurie at (763) 420-6350.

Humanists of Minnesota

Officers:
President -
Audrey Kingstrom:
(952) 924-1039, akingstrom@comcast.net
Vice President -
Harlan Garbell:
(612) 928-0888, hgarbell@comcast.net
Treasurer -
Brad Bolin:
(612) 600-7352, breebertz@gmail.com
Secretary -
David Guell:
(763) 494-4095, dguell4@gmail.com

Webmaster -
Clint Buhs
Associate Webmaster -
Rohit Ravindran:
webmaster@humanistsofmn.org

Group Photographer -
Richard Trombley

Historian -
Paul Heffron

Members of the board of directors -
Mark Coffey: (612) 385-8747, mjcoffey@usa.net
Dale Handeen: (612) 221-8594, dale.l.handeen@gmail.com
Mahad Muhammad: (612) 807-6373, mahadmuhammad2000@gmail.com
Rohit Ravindran: (773) 290-7667, rravin2@gmail.com

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May 2017

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Your membership is vital to the growth of Humanism and the Humanist community. Our membership categories are:
(For categories at RH and above, married couples or domestic partners will be considered as one membership, if you so indicate.)
( ) (B) Budget, $25.00
( ) (RI) Regular Individual, $40.00
( ) (RH) Regular Household, $60.00
( ) (S) Sustaining, $100.00
( ) (P) Patron, $250.00
( ) (BN) Benefactor, $500.00
( ) (L) Life Membership, $1000.00
( ) (T) Trial subscription for 3 months, just ask
*Full time students at an accredited institution can receive a complimentary subscription

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For national or international membership write to:

American Humanist Association
1821 Jefferson Place NW
Washington, DC 20036
www.americanhumanist.org

Council for Secular Humanism
PO Box 664
Amherst, NY 14226
www.secularhumanism.org

Please check the appropriate box, complete the information and mail with your check to Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997.

Name: _____

Address:_____

City/State/Zip:_____

Phone number:_____

e-mail:_____
(for special announcements, blogs etc. Keeps you in touch!)

I would like my newsletter sent via email ( ) (in color!)

Second Member at same address (for RH and above):

_____

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